

THE RESURRR



encouraged by seeing Stuart Gordon's *Re-Animator*. "After that I went out and devoured everything I could by him," recalls Friedman. "And the one story that struck me as having the most filmic potential was *The Case Of Charles Dexter Ward*, because there's so much there. His stuff is mostly short stories - I saw some great ideas, but I didn't see a film."

In fact *The Case Of Charles Dexter Ward* is one of only three short stories that Lovecraft ever wrote (the others are *At The Mountains Of Madness* and *Dream Quest Of Unknown Kadath*). At 120 pages in length, it seemed about right for literal transference to the screen. But Friedman found he had problems finding a central focus for the tale. "There was no central character. It's almost as if the case itself were the main character and, unless you want to do a documentary, that doesn't hold up."

Nevertheless, after several drafts Friedman had completed a screenplay that he managed to sell to Tony Scotti of the independent film production group, Scotti Brothers. The script (which at the time was called *Shatterbrain*)

Back in the early 60s Roger Corman made a movie called *The Haunted Palace*, based on a scary H.P. Lovecraft yarn called *The Case Of Charles Dexter Ward*. It told of how the title character was taken over by his 17th Century ancestor, an evil warlock named Joseph Curwen, and forced to commit diabolical

acts. Now the same story has been dusted off, updated to the modern day and used as the basis for *The Resurrected*, a gory terror tale in the grand tradition of *Re-Animator*.

The Resurrected was initiated by screenwriter Brent Friedman, whose interest in Lovecraft's work was first

was then sent to Dan O'Bannon, who it was thought would make an appropriate director for the project. By sheer coincidence O'Bannon had also been trying to adapt the selfsame novella and he immediately agreed to sign up for the production.

Says Friedman, "When O'Bannon

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The latest film adaptation of the work of H.P. Lovecraft comes from Dan O'Bannon, the same guy who brought us *Return Of The Living Dead* and *Alien*. Will this be the best Lovecraft movie since *Re-Animator*, or just another creep round an all too familiar crypt? Read our exclusive Sneak Preview and make up your own mind...

came on board he had been trying to write a script from the same material and he felt he had never managed to crack the third act. He read my script and said, 'You've solved a lot of the problems, but the way I always had it in my mind was that the main character would be a detective.' So if he was going to get involved - and everyone was keen that he did - then he wanted to tell the story his way."

In the original Lovecraft story, the title character is confined to an asylum overseen by a Dr Willett, who discovers that the patient in his care is not actually Charles Dexter Ward, but Ward's 17th century ancestor Joseph Curwen, who, having been resurrected by his lookalike descendant, killed him and took his place. The central

focus was Willett, but O'Bannon wanted to dump this character straight away, saying he found him to be 'the most boring, colourless hero in the history of literature.'

Says Friedman: "Dan's thinking was that the story naturally lent itself to a detective hero, because there are so many clues to be discovered. It looked good on paper, but the execution was a lot trickier than he had made it seem. The toughest thing was to keep the detective both intellectually and emotionally involved. Dan's idea was to involve him with the wife of the Charles Dexter Ward character, which brought a fresh and interesting new level to the story."

The screenplay also contained some big horror set-pieces, some of which had to be toned down to fit the constraints of what

was essentially a low budget movie. "I had come up with some really outrageous stuff," explains Friedman. "But it wasn't long before people were saying, 'What's it going to cost to film this?' Then the question became, 'If we lose this stuff, are we going to be able to compensate for a slow beginning?', and everyone said, 'Well, we'll have a great ending.' And that's pretty much how it turned out. It starts as a detective story and build real slowly until we get to the all-stops-out horror scenes at the end".

Helping to pull out those stops was make-up wizard Todd Masters, whose company provided the extensive visual effects. "The budget cuts hurt us a lot," admits Masters. "But we generally found our way round things. For instance, in one scene the detective hero (played by *Hawk* *The Slayer's* John Terry) was supposed to resurrect something weird in Curwen's laboratory. That got axed so that we could afford to rent a studio, but we still needed something to keep the story well paced - because everyone expects to see a monster round the corner and not just a leaky tap. So O'Bannon said, 'John still needs to develop something inside that laboratory. How about he takes a pinch of ash and resurrects two fingers?' We argued about that for a while and then I drew up some weird finger monsters and turned this thing into almost a crab monster with fingers, an eyeball, and some external organs."

Not all of the effects could be achieved during the rushed principal photography. But fortunately there was plenty of time after filming finished in December of 1990 to add a variety of optical work. "It turned into this Behemoth," laughs Masters, "with requests coming in every day from Dan and the producers. Things just went crazy after a while. It just started snowballing. They really did want an effects-filled film. Then, six months later they said, 'Wait a minute! How many effects are there in this damn movie?'"

The icing on the ghoulish cake was provided by a good symphonic score from *Re-Animator's* Richard Band, and a fine performance from *Fright Night's* scary Chris Sarandon as the possessed Charles Dexter Ward. With all this going for it, *The Resurrected* looks set to be one of the better Lovecraft adaptations to grace the screen. Unfortunately it hasn't done too well at the box-office in the States and thus seems destined for a straight-to-video release here in the UK - we'll keep you informed when. In the meantime we know you'll enjoy looking at these grisly pics from the movie - we reckon they're enough to wake the dead!

